

Thank you Mr. Chairman (Joel Sheltron) and members of the committee.

My Name is Greg MacMaster, While I may be President of the Grand Traverse Bay Underwater Preserve Council - I'm not here representing any organization. I'm standing before you as a member of the public.

I am an avid scuba diver and I enjoy all the benefits shared by many when it comes to the Great Lakes. But one thing I don't enjoy, is witnessing a committee, which is supposed to have equal representation across the table on recreation, tourism, environmental and history, be controlled by a regulatory agency and then have "no comment" when issues of recreation and tourism arise.

I have served on two committee's, while one is a public non-profit organization dedicated to the underwater preserves, the other is a governor appointed position on the Michigan Underwater and Salvage Preserve Committee. (to be changed by **HB 4638**: Great Lakes state park and salvage advisory committee pending legislation approval). This committee once was attended by members who represented the tourism & recreation side of Michigan (back in 2000). Now, after sitting in on a number of sessions, I have concluded that the future of recreation and tourism within our own state was in jeopardy. We needed to bring the right players to the table and help lift Michigan's opportunity for equal share in tourism dollars nationwide! The passing of this Bill will do just that.

HB 4639, Will give new meaning to the term "advisory" and finally put responsibility of the decision making process into the hands of those capable of making those decisions. Here they can finally put to rest the indecisions that have plagued the current committee. No more "MDNR isn't here to comment, MDNR doesn't have any interest..." And finally... a fund to create opportunities where the state wasn't able to provide previously. It's a shame to have a law prohibiting any state funding opportunities in the creation of an underwater preserve. Here we're preserving Michigan's maritime heritage and the state has a law that says "No state money will be provided". The passing of HB 4639 will provide a creative solution to a problem that has plagued the state for many years, "no money".

Owners of a scuba shop in Muskegon were shut-out of an opportunity to help promote underwater tourism in their region. Now, both are gainfully employed not in their scuba shop, but elsewhere. And after talking with other scuba shops, they are not alone. Many are financially strapped. Granted, the economy may be hurting – but why push them out? Why can't we create an environment where we can enhance what nature has created and enjoy it for all its worth? **HB 4640** – enhancing recreational opportunities - does just that!

San Diego conducted a project called "Project Yukon". One warship, sunk off the coast, and their numbers started increasing. I'm not talking about scuba diving numbers; I'm not talking about tourism numbers. I'm talking Tax Based revenue

to the tune of 5 million dollars annually! This wasn't an estimate. This was factual numbers gathered after the sinking.

If you think that number is high, wait until you hear the numbers from Florida. We're now into the billions in tax based revenue annually!

It is my hope that you find it in your heart to help re-shape Michigan's future in tourism, specifically underwater tourism and pass these bills.

Thank you.